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WASHINGTON (AFP) — US lawmakers demanded Thursday that the United Nations impose tighter controls on the UN agency that manages aid to the Palestinians to ensure no US funds end up in the pockets of extremists.

"The United Nations should take immediate steps to improve the transparency and accountability of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA)," said Democratic Representative Steve Rothman.

Rothman has written a non-binding resolution urging US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to certify that "no American taxpayer dollars are being directed to terrorists or to further terrorist propaganda" through UNRWA.

The New Jersey lawmaker said that while aides to US President Barack Obama had yet to explicitly support the measure, "they assure me that they share our concerns."

The resolution calls on UNRWA to improve transparency of its operations by posting on the Internet copies of all educational materials used at agency-administered schools.

"UNRWA schools have been known to, and are still continuing, to include textbooks, videotapes, and other materials which not only slander the state of Israel but also are virulently anti-Semitic," said Rothman.

The resolution also urges UNRWA to enhance screening procedures, including terrorist name-recognition software, "to ensure that UNRWA staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries are neither terrorists themselves, nor affiliated with known terrorist organizations."

"These are certainly reasonable recommendations, especially in this time of severe economic crisis in America, when so many of our countrymen are hurting, and the world is suffering and in need of resources, that none of our US taxpayer dollars goes to any terrorist organization," said Rothman.

Republican Representative Mark Kirk blasted UNRWA's accounting practices as likely to enable the Palestinian military group Hamas to syphon off some of a new US aid pledge of 900 million dollars for the West Bank and Gaza.

If the group managed to grab 10 percent of that package, "the United States taxpayer would be then the number-two financial supporter of Hamas after the government of Iran," he said.

Kirk said he would rather see the funds go through the US Agency for International Development, the World Food Program, or the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

"If we insist on providing these funds we should provide them to reputable foreign assistance organizations who are operating under American standards of transparency and accountability," he said.

The United States has provided 3.4 billion dollars to UNRWA since 1950 and set aside 148 million in 2008, while 140 million of the nearly one billion dollar pledge is slated to go through the agency, said Rothman.